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## The Garden of Forking Paths: Law Libraries and the Future of the Catalog

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# **THE GARDEN OF FORKING PATHS: LAW LIBRARIES AND THE FUTURE OF THE CATALOG**

**Bret Masterson**

As libraries struggle to redefine their roles in a world of diminishing funding and proliferating digital sources of information, many proposals for change have focused on the library catalog, the primary interface between libraries and their users. Recent reports from the Library of Congress<sup>1</sup> (the “Calhoun Report”), the University of California Libraries<sup>2</sup> (the “BSTF Report”), and Indiana University<sup>3</sup> (the “IU White Paper”) contain a number of broad recommendations for changes to catalogs and cataloging. Many of the ideas in these documents are quite general, and to some degree they represent conflicting viewpoints on how library catalogs should evolve. However, all three reports are premised on the notions that improved access to information on the Web has created a significant shift in the expectations of library users and that libraries must make radical changes to their catalogs to respond to this new environment.<sup>4</sup> The issues involved in the future of the catalog go to the heart of the debate about the role of libraries in the twenty-first century.

This paper provides an overview of many of the visions for the future of the library catalog. Most of the proposals currently under discussion come from the broader world of academic libraries. Although many of these recommendations may not have a direct impact on law libraries, they are relevant to many law library users (particularly in light of the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of law faculty research), and as advocates for these users, law librarians should take part in the conversations about the future of bibliographic services that are now taking place.

I will also examine how the types of changes being considered might be utilized or adapted to serve (or potentially undermine) the unique needs and preferences of law library. Many of the innovations being advocated are to some degree beyond the control of individual libraries – they will require added features from software vendors, changes to metadata standards, or cooperative action by groups of institutions. However, every library now should be considering the future of the catalog, making decisions about what types of changes will best serve the library’s mission and users, investigating and experimenting with innovations that can be put in place in the short term, and advocating for long-term catalog features that best cater to their needs. Catalogers and technical service personnel should already be familiar with these issues to some degree. The goal

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<sup>1</sup> Karen Calhoun, *The Changing Nature of the Catalog and its Integration with Other Discovery Tools*, March 17, 2006, available at <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/calhoun-report-final.pdf> [hereinafter the “Calhoun Report”].

<sup>2</sup> Bibliographic Services Task Force, The University of California Libraries, *Rethinking How We Provide Bibliographic Services for the University of California*, December 2005, available at <http://libraries.universityofcalifornia.edu/sopag/BSTF/Final.pdf> [hereinafter the “BSTF Report”].

<sup>3</sup> Indiana University, *A White Paper on the Future of Cataloging at Indiana University*, January 15, 2006, available at [http://www.iub.edu/~libtserv/pub/Future\\_of\\_Cataloging\\_White\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.iub.edu/~libtserv/pub/Future_of_Cataloging_White_Paper.pdf) [hereinafter the “IU White Paper”].

<sup>4</sup> Diane I. Hillmann, *Is There a Future for Cataloging?*, Technicalities, July/August 2006, at 9, 9-10

of this paper is to provide background on the debate for reference librarians (who can offer unique insights into how to improve access to information and how users are likely to seek it) and for law library administrators (who will make the ultimate decisions concerning what resources to allocate to improving the catalog), so that they may add their perspectives to the discussion.

## **An Overview of Major Recent Reports on the Future of the Catalog**

### ***The BSTF Report***

The BSTF Report was issued in late 2005 and engendered considerable discussion in the library community, both from librarians excited by the direction it offered and from others who challenged many of the report's conclusions.<sup>5</sup> The Report took as its premise that "our bibliographic systems have not kept pace with this changing [digital] environment. . . . Our users expect simplicity and immediate reward and Amazon, Google, and iTunes are the standards against which we are judged. . . . The current Library catalog is poorly designed for the tasks of finding, discovering, and selecting the growing set of resources available in our libraries."<sup>6</sup> Focusing on current technologies and proposals widely discussed in existing library literature,<sup>7</sup> the BSTF sought to articulate "what users expect from the next generation library search interface and what infrastructure changes libraries need in order to continue to provide effective services."<sup>8</sup>

The BSTF Report sets forth fifteen basic goals for the catalog of the future, which are grouped into four categories. Over half of the recommendations involve improvements to search and retrieval. In this portion of the Report, the BSTF advocates the following enhancements:

- Direct access to items – full text whenever possible, options for fulfillment otherwise – accompanied by information allowing users to assess likely turnaround time and make an informed choice among multiple possibilities;<sup>9</sup>
- "Recommender" features to aid in selection – both content-based (from an analysis of the user's retrieval set) and filter-based (from what other users have deemed relevant or interesting) (the Report here cites Amazon.com as an example);<sup>10</sup>
- Support for user customization of the search interface;<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Sarah Barbara Watstein, *The buzz and the reality: when the rubber hits the bibliographic services road in the University of California and what that means for the rest of us ... Rethinking how we provide bibliographic services for the University of California*, 34 Reference Services Review 193 (2006).

<sup>6</sup> BSTF Report, *supra* note 2, at 7.

<sup>7</sup> Appendix G to the Report, *id.* at 58-79, lists and summarizes the many articles that the Task Force considered in reaching its conclusions, while Appendix E, *id.* at 45-48, identifies several web sites that demonstrate some of the features recommended in the Report.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 12-13.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* at 13.

- Generating alternatives for failed or suspect searches – reacting to likely spelling errors (*a la* Google), suggesting alternative search terms or offering to extend to other catalogs or the Web if a search produces few or no results;<sup>12</sup>
- Improved navigation of large sets of search results through “family tree” linking of serial records fields,<sup>13</sup> faceted browsing, and implementation of concepts from the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR);<sup>14</sup>
- Offering bibliographic services “where users are,” beyond library websites – in virtual learning environments, course websites, institutional portals, and even via external search engines;<sup>15</sup>
- Relevance ranking of search results using search engine-style algorithms;<sup>16</sup>
- Better searching for non-Roman materials.<sup>17</sup>

Part II of the BSTF Report, “Rearchitcting the OPAC,” focuses on creating a single catalog interface for all University of California libraries that would allow searching across collections, databases, and other “silos” of information available to users.<sup>18</sup> To enable federated searching, the Task Force recommends “pre-harvesting” metadata for the full expanse of the UC libraries’ collections. (While the Report cites Google as an example of a tool that is able to reach across different formats to generate a single list of results, it does not specify what sort of technology could fulfill this function within the context of a large library collection.) To help users work with the large retrieval sets that could result from a federated search, the Report recommends that search results be grouped by format of items and provide users with additional options for ordering and filtering.

In Part III of the Report, the BSTF asserts that “as huge amounts of e-learning items and unique digital materials are added to our collections, the sheer volume, diversity, and complexity of such materials will require new forms of cataloging practices to be adopted.”<sup>19</sup> To streamline the cataloging process as well as to promote uniformity within a single UC system-wide catalog, the Report recommends treating all UC libraries cataloging as a “single enterprise” and implementing a single data store for the system.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 13-14.

<sup>13</sup> As an example of this sort of navigation, the Report cites an example from the Washington State Library web site, <http://www.secstate.wa.gov/library/docs/iii/seattlepi.htm> that offers a visual representation of the various titles under which the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* has been published.

<sup>14</sup> BSTF Report, *supra* note 2, at 14-15. *See also* International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions Section on Cataloging, *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records* (1998), available at <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/frbr/frbr.pdf>; *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR): Hype or Cure-All?* (Patrick Le Boeuf ed., 2005). The North Carolina State University Libraries OPAC, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/catalog/>, is cited in this and many other reports and articles as an example of an effort to use FRBR concepts and other tools to help users refine searches and navigate search results. *See* Kristin Antelman, Emily Lynema, and Andrew K. Pace, *Toward a Twenty-First Century Library Catalog*, *Info. Tech. & Libr.*, September 2006, 128.

<sup>15</sup> BSTF Report, *supra* note 2, at 15-17.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* at 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* at 18-20.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 20.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* at 21-22.

The Report also advocates further development of processes to automate the creation of catalog records, such as tools to create and harvest metadata (including “enriched metadata” such as tables of contents, cover art, promotional descriptions, content excerpts, and even geographic data)<sup>21</sup> Vendors would be encouraged to continue to provide MARC data, and the BSTF recommends that UC accept all vendor records as is (“recognize that ‘good enough is good enough’”).<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the UC libraries would shift from creating a complete catalog record before putting an item on the shelf to a process in which materials would be made available immediately upon acquisition. An item might initially be represented in the catalog by a “skeletal” record, but the record would eventually be filled out through automated processes that would run periodically.<sup>23</sup> The BSTF Report suggests that records be created manually only where automated processes fall short and “the material is high-value enough to justify it.”<sup>24</sup>

The BSTF Report recommends that future catalogs be constructed to accommodate multiple metadata schemes – if a schema other than MARC, AACR2, and LCSH is more appropriate for a given bibliographic resource, it should be used. Indeed, the Report suggests that UC Libraries at least consider abandoning use of controlled vocabularies for subject description altogether and replacing them with automated metadata harvested from sources such as tables of contents and indexes.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, the Report identifies some areas where resources should be devoted to manually improving metadata. Name, main title, series titles, and uniform titles for prolific authors should be enhanced; a better structure for serials holdings is also recommended; and descriptive metadata may merit manual enhancement in the case of some non-textual resources that are undiscoverable without it.<sup>26</sup>

In April 2006, UC Libraries’ Systemwide Operations and Planning Advisory Group (SOPAG) released a follow-up to the BSTF Report. The SOPAG Survey summarized reactions to the BSTF Report provided on a questionnaire that SOPAG sent to libraries and other groups within the UC system.<sup>27</sup> The responses indicate support for many of the Reports’ recommendations, including federated searching, pre-harvesting metadata, a single catalog interface for all libraries in the system, and coordinated and streamlined cataloging processes.<sup>28</sup>

The respondents to the SOPAG Survey embraced the notion of incorporating additional types of metadata into the catalog but voiced significant opposition to the proposal to

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<sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 25-26.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* at 25.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> *Id.* at 23-24.

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> University of California Libraries Systemwide Operations and Planning Advisory Group, *SOPAG Invitation to Comment on the Bibliographic Services Task Force Report Analysis of Feedback*, April 26, 2006, available at <http://libraries.universityofcalifornia.edu/sopag/BSTF/AnalysisResponses.pdf> [hereinafter “SOPAG Survey”].

<sup>28</sup> *Id.* at 1-6.

move away from controlled subject vocabularies.<sup>29</sup> The UC Heads of Technical Services group felt strongly that controlled vocabularies offer significant benefits to searcher that at present cannot be matched by full-text searching.<sup>30</sup> One UC library noted that since subject headings are frequently provided by vendors, bibliographic utilities, or other outside sources, the cost savings from eliminating controlled subject terms would be minimal and would not justify the loss of search capacity.<sup>31</sup>

The other recommendation from the BSTF Report that prompted significant opposition was that of physically consolidating all cataloging for the UC system. Librarians accepted the need to better coordinate cataloging operations among libraries and acknowledged that at least some outsourcing of cataloging could improve workflow. However, many respondents believed that consolidating cataloging operations would be more costly, would increase turnaround time for many items, and would adversely impact other areas of library services by causing institutions to lose contact with subject experts.<sup>32</sup>

Despite misgivings about a few of the proposals set forth in the BSTF Report, librarians in the UC system indicated that they are committed to the overall goals of attempting to make significant changes to bibliographic services and that they are willing to take some risks along the way.<sup>33</sup> As one of the libraries put it,

[Libraries] may have a tendency to overanalyze their research but are reluctant to put something out there or present new product. In comparison, commercial ventures such as Google puts out new features all the time, tests them in the real world. If they work, they stay, if not, they're gone:

- Build it, try it, improve it
- Study the marketplace (Amazon, Google, etc.) for working models
- We should not be afraid to make mistakes.<sup>34</sup>

However, many of the respondents to the SOPAG survey cautioned that user studies should be performed prior to committing to any major changes. They urged SOPAG to attempt to confirm the user assumptions contained in the BSTF Report and to determine what UC Libraries' users really want before making final decisions about new systems and processes.<sup>35</sup>

### ***The Calhoun Report***

In spring 2005, the Library of Congress engaged Karen Calhoun to research the changing nature of the catalog and to consider ““a framework for its integration with other discovery tools.””<sup>36</sup> Rather than focusing on these issues as they related specifically to

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<sup>29</sup> *Id.* at 2, 18-19.

<sup>30</sup> *Id.* at 19.

<sup>31</sup> *Id.* at 18.

<sup>32</sup> *Id.* at 2-3, 26-29.

<sup>33</sup> *Id.* at 3, 33-35.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.* at 34.

<sup>35</sup> *Id.* at 4-5, 35.

<sup>36</sup> Calhoun Report, *supra* note 1, at 8 (quoting Library of Congress, *Bibliographic Control of Web Resources: A Library of Congress Action Plan*, December 20, 2001, available at <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/bibcontrol/actionplan.html>).

LC, Calhoun addressed in her report the future of research library catalogs. The Calhoun Report offers a number of options for changing the catalog and cataloging practice, some overall strategies for libraries to move forward, and an assessment of some of the technical and organizational issues involved in making changes. Drawn from a literature review focused on writing from the previous five years and from structured interviews with librarians, information scholars, and individuals in the information industry,<sup>37</sup> the Calhoun Report “is intended to elicit support, dialogue, collaboration, and movement toward solutions and a phased approach to change at LC and in the library community at large.”<sup>38</sup> The Calhoun Report is important for two reasons: it sets forth many of the options for and issues involved in evolving the library catalog, and it indicates how LC is likely to approach its support for cataloging in the next few years.<sup>39</sup>

Calhoun’s interviews were premised on the notion that the library catalog as it currently exists is reaching the end of its useful life. She notes that “each question was intended to elicit the kind of information that an investor might want to know about any product or service (in this case, the catalog) whose market position is eroding.”<sup>40</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, the consensus Calhoun took from her interviews was that “today’s library catalogs are long on problems and short on unique benefits for users” and that “the cost-effectiveness of cataloging tradition and practice is under fire.”<sup>41</sup> While acknowledging the catalog’s strength as an inventory control tool, the Report suggests that libraries must respond to the increasing tendency of scholars and students to ignore library catalogs in favor of other tools for discovering information.<sup>42</sup> It suggests that metasearch technologies (efforts to expand the scope of the catalog to include other sources of scholarly information) are not likely to meet with much success in the near term. The Report implies that rather than attempting to bring the Web into the catalog, libraries should be focusing on making the catalog more visible to users of the Web.<sup>43</sup> Towards this end, the Report identifies some general strategies currently being explored: attempts such as Open WorldCat and Google Book Search to combine multiple services for finding and requesting information through an open Web interface; aggregating catalog data among groups of libraries (as recommended in the BSTF Report) and “using library ILSes as a middle ‘switching’ layer to enable delivery”; and pushing individual catalog

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<sup>37</sup> Calhoun Report, *supra* note 1, at 8, 29-30. None of the 23 people Calhoun interviewed for the report was directly affiliated with a law library. Calhoun provides an extended discussion of the opinions voiced by her interviewees in Appendix C to the Report, pp. 31-44.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>39</sup> See Brian Provenzale, *Program Report: Cataloging at the Crossroads: LC’s Series Decision and Its New Role in National Cataloging Policy*, Technical Services Law Librarian, September 2006, 30, 31 (asserting that the report “likely signals the direction of future decisions by LC”). Note also that the Calhoun Report also suggests OCLC’s perspective on the future of the catalog, as Ms. Calhoun recently became Vice President for OCLC WorldCat and Metadata Services. OCLC news release, *Karen Calhoun named OCLC Vice President*, March 20, 2007, retrieved April 27, 2007, from <http://www.oclc.org/news/releases/200657.htm>.

<sup>40</sup> Calhoun Report, *supra* note 1, at 8.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.* at 9.

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*



records directly onto the Web, which the Report describes as a “huge opportunity” that “will substantially enhance scholarly productivity worldwide.”<sup>44</sup>

The Calhoun Report goes on to offer 32 general “remedies” for improving the library catalog. Calhoun groups these recommendations in three categories: “Extending” options, which are designed to extend the life of the catalog through reducing costs and offering innovations targeted at existing users; “Expanding” options, which are designed to attract new users to catalogs and library collections; and “Leading” options, which involve “expanding the research library’s role in developing information systems that support teaching, learning, and research on a global scale.”<sup>45</sup> The Report conceptualizes these sets of changes on a continuum – Extending is necessary to set the stage for Expanding the catalog and eventually Leading to an entirely different version of the catalog that provides new services to an expanded set of users.

The most extensive set of recommendations in the Report is the one for extending the catalog. Many of these suggestions are aimed at streamlining cataloging and making data more cross-platform compatible; several echo proposals put forth in the BSTF Report. Recommendations in this part of the Report include

- “Eliminate local practices and customized workflows in favor of best practices” (in other words, increase standardization)<sup>46</sup>
- “Simplify catalog records to a set of basic elements to support discovery, browsing, identification, delivery, resource sharing, linking, and inventory control”<sup>47</sup>
- “As much as possible, obtain or reuse data available at the point of selection, or automatically generate this data” – limit manual creation of metadata to where “it is the only viable approach”<sup>48</sup>
- “On campuses with multiple technical processing centers, integrate operations to achieve consistent practices, clear direction, and savings”<sup>49</sup>
- “Support the re-use of catalog data and cooperative development of new workflows and/or data elements to support mass digitization projects”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> *Id.* at 12-13.

<sup>46</sup> *Id.* at 14.

<sup>47</sup> *Id.* at 17. As an example of this sort of simplification, Calhoun refers to recent efforts by the Library of Congress to create an “access level record” standard for serials, designed both to improve discovery of items and to increase cataloging efficiency and reduce costs. *Access level records for serials* [not dated], available at <http://www.loc.gov/acq/conser/pdf/Chargele-pccaug17.pdf>. (The final report from CONSER, the group charged with creating an access level record for serials, was released after the Calhoun Report was published. The CONSER report identifies MARC and AACR2 elements most essential to catalog functions and estimates that limiting records to these elements will decrease time spent creating serial records by 20-25%. Elements omitted under the access level record standard include Distinguishing Uniform Titles, field 300 (physical description), many note fields, and some added entry fields (730, 740, 787). See CONSER, *Access Level Record for Serials Working Group Final Report*, July 24, 2006, available at <http://www.loc.gov/acq/conser/alrFinalReport.html>.)

<sup>48</sup> *Id.* This would seem to echo the BSTF Report’s call for increased automation of record creation and acceptance of some records containing “skeletal” data.

<sup>49</sup> *Id.* at 18.

<sup>50</sup> *Id.*



- “Participate [in] and insist on standards compliance”<sup>51</sup>

Regarding browsing and collocation, the Calhoun Report indicates support for continuing experiments with alternative methods of grouping search results, including clustering (particularly schemes that incorporate FRBR), ontologies, and taxonomies.<sup>52</sup> Name authority control and series authority control should also continue, albeit through cooperative programs and with an eye towards achieving additional cost savings.<sup>53</sup> MARC and AACR2 (or RDA) formats should continue to be used, but they should be supplemented with other metadata schema, not relied on exclusively.<sup>54</sup> However, the Report suggests that libraries “abandon the attempt to do comprehensive subject analysis manually with LCSH in favor of subject keywords [and] urge LC to dismantle LCSH.”<sup>55</sup> The Report also contains a recommendation that libraries “move to e-only journals” and that they “reconceptualize and simplify serial records,” although there is no discussion of this particular point.<sup>56</sup>

The “expand” set of recommendations in the Calhoun Report includes proposals for supplementing and improving user search results. Ideas in this section include adding data to results (images, reviews, tables of contents, etc.); improving organization and relevancy ranking of large retrieval sets; linking to full text whenever possible; offering “best-match retrieval”; and working towards federated searching.<sup>57</sup> As the BSTF did, Calhoun recommends that libraries “push library metadata and links out to course Web pages and portals”<sup>58</sup> and that they “invest in shared not local catalogs.”<sup>59</sup>

The discussion of “leading” in the Report is the least specific of the three proposal areas, probably because, as Calhoun notes, there are not yet any examples of libraries that have fully implemented such a strategy.<sup>60</sup> The leadership position that the Report advocates for libraries would require significant investment in as-yet-undeveloped information systems. To free up funds for such a plan, this strategy involves libraries pooling their collection and catalog activities and collaborating with both public and private partners.<sup>61</sup>

Calhoun acknowledges that libraries face significant obstacles in seeking to implement the proposals contained in the Report.<sup>62</sup> While much of the discussion of these challenges focuses on overcoming organizational resistance and creating consensus on specific

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<sup>51</sup> *Id.* at 14.

<sup>52</sup> *Id.* at 17-18.

<sup>53</sup> *Id.* at 18.

<sup>54</sup> *Id.* at 17, 32, 34-35.

<sup>55</sup> *Id.* Calhoun has stated elsewhere that she did not intend to suggest that libraries should abandon controlled subject vocabularies; instead, she supports shifting from LCSH to a post-coordinated approach (using separate topic, genre/form, and geographic vocabularies) that would be easier to use or even to automate. Diane I. Hillmann, *Is There a Future for Cataloging?*, *Technicalities*, July/August 2006, 9, 10.

<sup>56</sup> Calhoun Report, *supra* note 1, at 14.

<sup>57</sup> *Id.* at 19.

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*

<sup>59</sup> *Id.* at 14.

<sup>60</sup> *Id.* at 13.

<sup>61</sup> *Id.* at 15-16.

<sup>62</sup> *Id.* at 13, 15-16.

standards and practices, the Report does take note of some contrary forces that exist outside of libraries' direct control. For example, the inter-library sharing arrangements that underpin many of the Report's recommendations not only face technical challenges but also are likely to create legal and/or financial challenges – the world envisioned by the Calhoun Report would require libraries to extend licensed electronic resources to a much larger user community and to increase dramatically the reproduction of print works.<sup>63</sup> Calhoun also recognizes that many of the Report's proposals run contrary to the metrics by which research libraries are ranked, which give substantial weight to the number of items contained in local collections.<sup>64</sup> The strategy of diminishing redundancy among collections by instituting resource sharing on a larger scale is also to some degree at odds with libraries' mission of preservation. The Report states that balancing these competing priorities will be "a difficult, but not impossible task."<sup>65</sup>

The Calhoun Report suggests that in considering how to revitalize their catalogs, libraries will make different choices depending on factors such as available funding, their ability to find viable partners for collaborative and sharing arrangements, and their own perceptions as to the vitality of their existing catalog.<sup>66</sup> The Report would seem to allow for the possibility that a library's circumstances and user base could lead it to elect to continue with a fully local catalog and minimal integration of its bibliographic records into the open Web.<sup>67</sup> However, Calhoun makes it clear that she envisions a future in which shared catalogs are prevalent and the catalog itself, while continuing to embrace primarily monographs and serials (in both print and electronic form), will ultimately be integrated with other discovery mechanisms within "the larger scholarly information universe."<sup>68</sup>

### ***Mann's Response to the Calhoun Report***

A number of librarians and institutions have responded publicly to the Calhoun Report. Thomas Mann presented one of the most critical reactions in a paper prepared for the Library of Congress Professional Guild.<sup>69</sup> The main focus of Mann's critique is on Calhoun's recommendation for abandoning LCSH in favor of Google-style keyword searching. Mann argues that users would lose a valuable tool for subject orientation,<sup>70</sup> that this approach would undermine the more precise the research needs of scholars,<sup>71</sup> and that it would effectively remove non-English language materials from searches.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Id.* at 15.

<sup>64</sup> *Id.*

<sup>65</sup> *Id.*

<sup>66</sup> *Id.* at 12.

<sup>67</sup> *Id.* at 16-17.

<sup>68</sup> *Id.* at 16.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Mann, *The changing nature of the catalog and its integration with other discovery tools. Final report. March 17, 2006. Prepared for the Library of Congress by Karen Calhoun. A critical review*, April 3, 2006, available at <http://www.guild2910.org/AFSCMECalhounReviewREV.pdf>.

<sup>70</sup> *Id.* at 11-14.

<sup>71</sup> *Id.* at 7-8, 11-13.

<sup>72</sup> *Id.* at 12-13.

Mann also asserts that Calhoun's assumptions about users are flawed. He contends that while many users may be going to Google first, eventually plenty of them are coming to the library when they need more depth.<sup>73</sup> Mann argues that users who need information quickly (or very current information) are always going to be better served by sources other than books (the Web, newsletters, articles, etc.); he believes that instead of focusing on speed, libraries should devote their resources to what they do well, namely supporting a structure for "systematic" retrieval.<sup>74</sup> Mann's view, put in the business world framework of analysis utilized in the Calhoun report, is that rather than competing with Google in the "market" of general information seeking (*i.e.*, quick information seeking), research libraries should focus on a "niche" market of serving the needs of scholars.<sup>75</sup>

### *The IU White Paper*

The IU White Paper combines approaches from the BSTF and Calhoun Reports. While it is focused on a specific library system, the White Paper attempts to identify broad trends in the world of catalogs and cataloging. The research that led to the IU White Paper was prompted by a 2005 presentation by Deanna Marcum of the Library of Congress in which Ms. Marcum challenged libraries "to help redefine cataloging as we know it today by working towards a model more in line with the 'world of Google.'"<sup>76</sup> After considering Marcum's remarks, IU assembled a Task Group on the Future of Cataloging at Indiana University to a) provide an overview of existing practices and identify trends "that will have a direct impact on cataloging operations"; and b) identify potential new roles for the catalog and for library catalogers.<sup>77</sup> In putting together the White Paper, the Task Group performed a literature review and also surveyed 18 cataloging agencies throughout the IU system.<sup>78</sup>

The first significant area of change discussed in IU White Paper is scholarly communications. The Task Group notes that not only are libraries purchasing more electronic resources and fewer print materials,<sup>79</sup> but economic pressures are driving

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<sup>73</sup> *Id.* at 7-10. Mann also contends that the group of interviewees Calhoun chose for her report is skewed. He notes that many of the individuals Calhoun spoke to come from institutions that have invested in the Google Book Search project and/or other architectures (*e.g.*, the OCLC system) that cannot display LCSH's left-anchored display. Mann goes so far as to assert that the Calhoun Report amounts to an attempt by LC "to 'tilt' the market toward OCLC and Google." *Id.* at 17.

<sup>74</sup> *Id.* at 7-10, 16-17. Mann analogizes the Calhoun Report's approach to requiring everyone to cook on a George Foreman grill: "Should *all* cooking be reduced to George Foreman grilling because it provides "something" in a way that is *faster* than an oven can produce." *Id.* at 13.

<sup>75</sup> *Id.* at 7. Calhoun acknowledges a "niche" option for libraries but characterizes it as retreating to a focus on a specific subject area "in which demand is expected to be reasonably stable" and moving to serve users in this subject area exclusively. Calhoun Report, *supra* note 1, at 12. Mann feels that Calhoun has misrepresented the niche strategy – he argues that Internet search engines and other information resources outside the library catalog do not support scholarship in general, leaving it for research libraries to focus on supporting this segment. Mann, *supra* note 63, at 7.

<sup>76</sup> IU White Paper, *supra* note 3, at 3 (quoting Deanna B. Marcum, *The Future of Cataloging*, Ebsco Information Services' Executive Seminar at 2006 Midwinter Meeting of the American Library Association, January 16, 2006, available at <http://www.loc.gov/library/reports/CatalogingSpeech.pdf>).

<sup>77</sup> IU White Paper, *supra* note 3, at 3.

<sup>78</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>79</sup> *Id.* at 4, 9.

universities to establish open-access institutional repositories as a means of attempting to “regain control” of scholarly communications.<sup>80</sup> Libraries are directing many institutional repository projects, primarily because “[a]rchival activities have no value unless there is also a functional indexing and retrieval system.”<sup>81</sup> The White Paper also discusses the “explosion” of non-library web content, focusing on the Google Book Search project (while noting that its analysis applies equally to similar projects being undertaken by Microsoft and Yahoo). The Task Group concludes that

In its current state of development, *Google Book Search* is not likely to have much impact at all. Google can offer a depth of access to the full text of individual works that catalogers simply cannot even begin to approach. However, Google is in the indexing business. It is not in the metadata business. ... Are cataloger-supplied subject entries for a work even necessary once the full text of a work is searchable? While one might be tempted to say that they are not necessary, this is in fact not the case. [Emphasis added.]<sup>82</sup>

As further support for this conclusion, the White Paper notes that the University of Michigan, one of the participants in the Google Book Search project, expects that the only effect the project will have on cataloging at the University will be to add one more task to the process – the school will begin adding URLs for the digital scans of books into the catalog records for the print originals.<sup>83</sup>

The White Paper recognizes that the next generation of library users is emerging from a world that is dominated by digital resources rather than print. These scholars and students will have different expectations for libraries: “(1) a wide variety of choices; (2) continuous improvement in products and services; (3) the ability to customize and personalize their library services; and (4) instant gratification.”<sup>84</sup> At the same time, the Task Group expects funding problems and continuing price increases from vendors to diminish collection development and further drive libraries away from print acquisitions and towards more digital resources and cooperative ventures.<sup>85</sup> Echoing perspectives expressed in the BSTF and Calhoun Reports, the White Paper foresees libraries continuing to streamline the cataloging process through options such as outsourcing MARC record creation, diminishing local customization, and utilizing evolving technologies to harvest existing metadata.<sup>86</sup> However, the White Paper does not predict that these trends will decrease work for catalogers and diminish the need for the catalog. Instead, the Task Group anticipates that it will simply broaden the range of tasks that catalogers perform – streamlining will free up catalogers to spend more time on tasks that

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<sup>80</sup> *Id.* at 5-6.

<sup>81</sup> *Id.* at 6 (quoting Charles E. Phelps, *The Future of Scholarly Communication: A Proposal for Change* [draft], June 5, 1997, available at [http://www.econ.rochester.edu/Faculty/PhelpsPapers/Phelps\\_paper.html](http://www.econ.rochester.edu/Faculty/PhelpsPapers/Phelps_paper.html)).

<sup>82</sup> IU White Paper, *supra* note 3, at 6. The White Paper goes on to endorse Thomas Mann’s argument that “Google’s keyword search mechanism, backed by the display of results in ‘relevance ranked’ order, is expressly designed and optimized for quick information seeking rather than scholarship.” Thomas Mann, *Will Google’s Keyword Searching Eliminate the Need for LC Cataloging and Classification*, last updated August 15, 2005, available at <http://www.guild2910.org/searching.htm>.

<sup>83</sup> IU White Paper, *supra* note 3, at 7.

<sup>84</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>85</sup> *Id.* at 8-9.

<sup>86</sup> *Id.* at 10.

require a greater level of expertise.<sup>87</sup> In part this will play out in catalogers employing a broad range of metadata schema beyond MARC – “each [different schema] will be used where appropriate to provide highly granular access to materials beyond the scope of the traditional MARC catalog.”<sup>88</sup> The White Paper suggests that cataloging will expand beyond MARC format in part because MARC is not well-suited to creating records for the digital resources that will play an increasingly important part in library collections, but also because libraries are likely to devote greater resources to creating detailed descriptive records for unique items held in special collections.<sup>89</sup> The Task Group warns that as the job of a cataloger shifts from applying a single cataloging code and format to being able to work with several different formats and to select the appropriate one for a given situation, the training, recruitment, and retention of catalogers will be more of a challenge for libraries.<sup>90</sup>

Regarding the form that the catalog will take in the future, the White Paper supports the notion that it will continue to move towards interoperability with other systems and be integrated into a “larger information environment.”<sup>91</sup> The White Paper endorses a vision for libraries articulated by Robin Wendler of Harvard University Libraries:

[W]e must facilitate access to digital collections, integrate digital collections with traditional collections, reassess cataloging standards and practices to account for new forms of publication, create a coherent information environment which brings together the heterogeneous cataloging and metadata generated throughout many diverse libraries, archives, and museums.<sup>92</sup>

The White Paper also anticipates a number of search innovations for catalog users, including FRBR-style grouping of results, natural language searching, taxonomy browsing, relevancy algorithms, personalization options, and “broadcast search features [which] will seamlessly expand searches beyond the catalog to other bibliographic databases.”<sup>93</sup> Contents of catalog records will also be enriched by external information such as tables of content, reviews, and even user-generated content such as comments and tags.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Id.* at 10-11.

<sup>88</sup> *Id.* at 11.

<sup>89</sup> *Id.*

<sup>90</sup> *Id.* at 14, 17. The White Paper also notes that the anticipated replacement for AACR2, Resource Description and Access (RDA), may also move cataloging away from rigid rules and force catalogers to make more judgments in selecting data that best serves patrons. *Id.* at 11. See generally Joint Steering Committee for Revision of Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, *RDA: Resource Description and Access – Prospectus*, March 13, 2007, available at <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/jsc/rdaprospectus.html>; Karen Coyle and Diane Hillman, *Resource Description and Access (RDA): Cataloging Rules for the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, 13 D-Lib Magazine, January/February 2007, available at <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/january07/coyle/01coyle.html>.

<sup>91</sup> IU White Paper, *supra* note 3, at 12.

<sup>92</sup> *Id.* at 13 (quoting Robin Wendler, *Branching Out: Cataloging Skills and Functions in the Digital Age*, J. of Internet Cataloging, vol.2 no.1, at 43, 44.

<sup>93</sup> IU White Paper, *supra* note 3, at 13.

<sup>94</sup> *Id.* at 11, 13-14.

After offering these views on the future of the catalog, the White Paper concludes with four strategic recommendations for the IU library system that are rather more conservative than those set forth in either the Calhoun Report or the BSTF Report.

- Catalog departments should more broadly share their knowledge of how to organize information – partner with other units within libraries and throughout the university to aid with choosing, designing, and developing information services.<sup>95</sup>
- Catalogers should expand their work to other forms of metadata. “Catalogers need to learn additional metadata standards and knowledge management theory to provide descriptive, administrative, access, and authority control to supplement their expertise with AACR2 and MARC.”<sup>96</sup>
- Libraries should continue to look for ways to improve cataloging efficiencies, including exploring automated mechanisms. However, the White Paper notes that libraries should take an holistic approach to this goal: “without library-wide support and buy-in, further refinement of existing workflows that will result in even more expedited cataloging processes are not likely to happen.”<sup>97</sup>
- Finally, libraries should monitor developing catalog technologies and standards with an eye to making changes in the near future. The White Paper suggests that to prepare for oncoming changes, libraries should focus attention in a number of areas, including usability of library systems, user needs relative to current cataloging levels, the impact of FRBR and proposals for changes to MARC structure, and cost/benefit analysis of adding information to MARC records, providing additional access points, and cataloging additional types of resources.<sup>98</sup>

### *A Summary of Where the Debate Stands Now*

While the major recent reports on the future of the library catalog disagree on a number of issues, it may be useful to articulate the concepts on which there appears to be some consensus. One point which most of the reports and articles seem to agree on is the need for increased standardization in order to improve bibliographic services. Many of the options being considered involve data sharing, record consolidation, automatic harvesting of data, and interoperability of systems, all of which require varying degrees of standardization in order to succeed. Some of these strategies are designed to broaden the scope of the catalog and the information contained therein while others are aimed at achieving cost and manpower savings. The resources saved may then be focused on improving the catalog in other ways. Most of the significant changes being discussed will require “buy-in” from a number of institutions before they can take place.

There also seems to be general acceptance of the notion that catalogs should move towards a more integrated search experience for users. It is often said that libraries have “too many silos,” meaning that users are often forced to repeat the same search in multiple databases and other search environments in order to find what they are looking for. The fact that different databases may treat the same search differently or require

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<sup>95</sup> *Id.* at 16.

<sup>96</sup> *Id.* at 17.

<sup>97</sup> *Id.* at 18.

<sup>98</sup> *Id.* at 18-19.

varying search terms only adds to users' frustrations. While authorities disagree on how quickly metasearch technology is moving forward and how to accomplish this goal,<sup>99</sup> they concede that libraries should be working toward integrating different discovery mechanisms for users.

Another goal for the catalog that shows up repeatedly in the literature is that there should be "no dead ends" when users search.<sup>100</sup> In other words, upgrade OPAC software with features that users have come to expect in other digital environments, such as automatic spelling correction, intelligent term stemming, and options when for failed or suspect searches such as alternative search terms, related terms, and related topics.<sup>101</sup> Karen Markey notes that these improvements were advocated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, shortly after the OPAC emerged as the prevailing catalog presentation technology, but that libraries devoted resources to other areas in the following years and allowed catalog development to stagnate.<sup>102</sup> There also seems to be a general consensus that searching should be enhanced in other ways, including supplementing bibliographic records with information such as tables of contents, images, reviews, user commentary, and full-text access to the material represented; ranking algorithms, clustering, and other means of sorting large retrieval sets; and improving the metadata in the catalog through revisions to prevailing formats and/or use of a broader range of schema.<sup>103</sup>

Aside from the details of many of these solutions, the biggest area of disagreement in the current catalog debate is over the role of subject cataloging. The library world appears to have accepted the notion that full-text digital access to materials will be increasingly common in the years to come.<sup>104</sup> As noted previously, both the BSTF Report and the Calhoun Report suggest that the widespread availability of full-text searching could eliminate the need for subject cataloging and thus produce savings that could be used to improve other aspects of the catalog; Mann and the respondents to the SOPAG survey strongly disagreed with this view. Markey proposes a third option, one that combines subject cataloging and document attribute metadata with Google-style searching to

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<sup>99</sup> The Calhoun Report seems to suggest that the best way for libraries to create a federated search environment may be to integrate catalog records with the Web.

<sup>100</sup> Calhoun Report, *supra* note 1, at 19; BSTF Report, *supra* note 2, at 13.

<sup>101</sup> BSTF Report, *supra* note 2, at 13..

<sup>102</sup> Karen Markey, *The Online Library Catalog: Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained?*, D-Lib Magazine, January/February 2007, available at <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/january07/markey/01markey.html>. Markey notes that other recommendations made during the period for improving online catalogs are once again on the table, including: adding tables of contents and back-of-the-book indexes to catalog records; broadening the scope of the catalog with full text from sources such as articles, dissertations, and government documents; and increasing finding options by providing alternative groupings of classification information.

<sup>103</sup> *Id.*; Calhoun Report, *supra* note 1, at 17-19, 34-35; BSTF Report, *supra* note 2, at 11-14, 17-19; IU White Paper, *supra* note 3, at 10-11, 13-14.

<sup>104</sup> See Markey, *supra* note 102. However, there is still considerable disagreement as to how the move to full-text access will play out. Some authorities have expressed skepticism as to whether for-profit entities such as Google and Microsoft are likely to follow through on their promises of providing open access to digitized works. See, e.g., Siva Vaidhyanathan *Questions Google Book Search*, ACRLLog, April 23, 2007, available at <http://acrlblog.org/2007/04/23/siva-vaidhyanathan-questions-google-book-search/>. Others have questioned whether initiatives like the Google Book project will be able to overcome potential copyright obstacles. See, e.g., IU White Paper, *supra* note 3, at 6.



improve catalog searching in a number of ways.<sup>105</sup> In this version of the catalog, subject headings and captions from classification would 1) be given a great deal of weight in ranking algorithms for search results; 2) be prominent parts of “brief-document displays” made available to help users sort through retrieval results more expeditiously; and 3) be given significant weight in algorithms for “relevance feedback (‘find more like’) mechanisms.”<sup>106</sup>

Yet another point on which there is some consensus is that libraries need to learn more about their users – how they search, how they would like to search, what they want from the library catalog – before making major decisions on what form the next generation of catalogs should take.<sup>107</sup> While it is easy to suggest that users want a Google world or that the “principle of least effort” should drive libraries towards a catalog interface that is as simple to use as possible,<sup>108</sup> the answers when it comes to specific groups of users are likely to be much more complex. If it were otherwise, in the pre-Web world, few library patrons would have made it past the sets of encyclopedias.

### **Focusing on Law Library Users**

In considering how some of the library catalog changes being advanced in the broader world of research libraries might play out in law libraries, it may be useful for law librarians to think about how some of the assumptions underlying the proposals match up with or differ from how individuals perform legal research.<sup>109</sup> One major difference between law libraries and other research library environments should be apparent to many law librarians. While in many libraries Google is viewed as the touchstone for comparison and the siren who is luring users away from the library catalog, in law libraries there is a third major competitor in the game: CALR. Legal researchers seem at least as likely to forego the catalog in favor of Lexis or Westlaw as they are to begin their research with a Web search engine. To make things even more complicated, utilizing CALR services as models for what the next generation of catalogs should look like leads to a very different set of ideas than trying to create a catalog based on Google. Lexis and Westlaw take an approach to searching that is in many ways the opposite of Google. They allow Boolean searching. Rather than focusing on simplicity, they offer users a vast array of search methods. Rather than offering “global” searching, they require users to make judgments about which database (or aggregation of databases) is likely to be most appropriate for their searches. They permit searching limited to fields within documents and allow filtering by criteria such as date. They allow searching that incorporates controlled subject terms (most notably through West’s Key Number system). They have “recommenders” that help searchers hone in on documents of particular relevance. These sorts of features suggest a very different model for a library catalog than one that utilizes

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<sup>105</sup> *Id.*

<sup>106</sup> *Id.*

<sup>107</sup> IU White Paper, *supra* note 3, at 18-19; SOPAG Survey, *supra* note 27, at 35.

<sup>108</sup> See Calhoun Report, *supra* note 1, at 25; Markey, *supra* note 102.

<sup>109</sup> Because this paper focuses on debates about the future of the catalog that are taking place in the research library world, I have focused my discussion of law libraries on libraries serving law schools.

post-Boolean search structure and relies heavily on relevancy rankings to connect users with the information they are seeking.

Of course, it is conceivable that law students and faculty favor Westlaw and Lexis *in spite of* all of the work they require users to do to construct searches and not because they prefer this sort of interface. It may be that what primarily attracts legal researchers to CALR systems is full text access and full text searching – students and faculty might never utilize Westlaw or Lexis if they could reach the same material through Google. Nevertheless, the fact that most law library users are accustomed to the search mechanisms in CALR systems at least suggests that they might be accepting of similar mechanisms incorporated into a library OPAC.<sup>110</sup>

CALR systems are used extensively in legal research because of another factor that distinguishes it from other disciplines. More than almost any other type of library patron, law library users tend to seek material at a more granular level than it is represented in catalog records. Serials make up a significant portion of law library collections, and current cataloging practices do not provide the sort of access to serial materials that users need. Even when using monographs, users rarely are seeking the entire work – they normally want only chapters or sections. Westlaw and Lexis provide catalog-type access to not only articles but also cases, statutes, portions of treatises – the level on which the typical user is seeking it. In this sort of environment, the barriers to metasearch are likely to be significant: even assuming that Westlaw or Lexis would allow their systems to be federated with library catalogs and other databases, the differences in metadata structure between catalog records and data in CALR systems would make it quite difficult to create a mechanism that could search both systems at once.<sup>111</sup> Conversely, it is unlikely that either changes to cataloging standards or data harvesting systems could allow law libraries to add enough data to serials records to provide users the sort of access that CALR systems offer.

Another assumption inherent in some of the proposals for improving the catalog is that while some library users are merely seeking information, often users want or need material of a given quality or possessing a certain level of authoritativeness. The catalog proposals suggest that libraries and library catalogs can help address this need by supplementing catalog records with content such as reviews, descriptions, and even user-generated comments. Again, this seems to be the case less frequently in law libraries, where users often are seeking either primary source material. Moreover, when users are tracking down secondary sources, frequently they are doing so in hope of being directed to primary sources on their topic. In these situations, any supplemental information short of the full text of a given resource is unlikely to be of significant value. On the other hand, it could be that many law library users are missing out on some valuable sources of

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<sup>110</sup> Indeed, it could be argued that revising the library catalog to make it more like Westlaw and Lexis would have the added benefit of providing law students with more opportunities to develop search skills that will serve them when they move into the professional world.

<sup>111</sup> See Pace, Andrew, *Much Ado About Metasearch*, American Libraries Online, June/July 2004, available at <http://www.ala.org/ala/online/techspeaking/techspeak2004/Junejuly2004muchado.cfm>.

information altogether, and that mechanisms for adding data to catalog records would address this need.<sup>112</sup>

There is perhaps a larger issue that runs through many of these questions about user behavior. Assuming that one accepts the premise that law students and legal faculty who rely exclusively on CALR systems and/or the Web for their research are regularly missing out on information resources from law library collections that would be more valuable or useful to them than what they are utilizing in their research,<sup>113</sup> it is important to understand whether they are doing so unknowingly, or simply for reasons of convenience or preference. In other words, are users unaware of the potential value of resources accessible through the catalog, or is the greater benefit to be derived from these sources outweighed by the hassle of obtaining them? Are they opting for digital sources because they believe these are as good as they are going to find, or merely because they believe they are “good enough”? If the former is the case, then catalog improvements will be meaningful only to the extent that they serve to make the catalog as easy to use as Westlaw and Lexis, which essentially means a catalog that offers full text access to a body of resources with at least as much scope as a CALR system. On the other hand, if a significant number of legal researchers are not using the OPAC because they feel that their results from Westlaw or Lexis are “good enough,” then a lesser degree of improvement to the catalog may be enough to change the equation – the challenge is not “how can we make the catalog as easy to use as Westlaw,” but merely “how can we improve the catalog enough to make users inclined to use it?” Instead of turning the catalog into the equal of a CALR system, we may only have to close the gap between the two options.

### **Unique Challenges Faced by Law Libraries**

Many of the proposals being discussed for the future of the catalog require cooperative arrangements among libraries on various levels: sharing of catalog records, sharing of collection materials, even sharing of catalogs through a consolidated interface. Traditionally law libraries have maintained a greater level of autonomy than other university libraries, and while the American Bar Association accreditation standards for law schools allow for some resource sharing arrangements, it is conceivable that the ABA might frown upon a law library integrating its collection and operations with other libraries to the extent discussed in some of the proposals.<sup>114</sup> Law libraries might also be more acutely impacted by some of the obstacles to cooperative arrangements recognized

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<sup>112</sup> Part of Markey’s proposal for redesigning the OPAC would address this sort of need to some degree. She suggests adding “qualification metadata” to records that would allow users to customize catalog searches “according to their level of understanding and knowledge of a domain.” The sort of attributes utilized could be customized by discipline, but Markey’s examples of such elements include the specific discipline of the item, the knowledge level it is appropriate to, the level of authority of the author, what sort of use the document is intended for, and how others benefited from the document (*i.e.*, user-generated perspectives). Markey, *supra* note 102.

<sup>113</sup> Presumably this would be the underlying justification for making any significant effort to attempt to improve the catalog.

<sup>114</sup> 2006-2007 ABA Standards for Approval of Law Schools, Chapter 6: Library and Information Resources, available at <http://www.abanet.org/legaled/standards/standards.html>.

in the Calhoun Report. Exposing law library databases to a significantly greater number of potential users could through a shared catalog would result in major hikes in licensing fees, and law libraries at some institutions might be particularly concerned about sharing arrangements diminishing the volume count metrics considered in law school rankings.

Many proposals for improving the catalog involve a greatly increased emphasis on digital access to library materials. In this regard, law libraries may be ahead of the curve: the aggressive digitization efforts made by Westlaw and Lexis over the last several years, combined with a trend of government entities providing significantly greater Web access to public documents, have made a significant amount of legal information available electronically. However, law libraries have traditionally served an archive function that goes beyond the “preservation of the human record” mission of other libraries and seeks to serve the social goal of democratic access to information concerning the operation of law.<sup>115</sup> To the extent that the catalog proposals envision paying for the cost of improved OPACs by replacing copies of print items with digitized versions licensed from or otherwise provided by third parties, they may be inconsistent with the preservation missions of law libraries.

One issue concerning the future of the catalog that is not addressed in any of the reports discussed previously in this paper is the cataloging of URLs, *i.e.* web sites and “born digital” materials. The significant amount of primary-source legal information offered on the Web, combined with a growing trend of many agencies and jurisdictions seeking cost savings by ceasing to print some low-demand publications in favor of offering them exclusively online, has led to an increase in cataloging Internet resources among law libraries over the last several years.<sup>116</sup> The experience law librarians have gained in dealing with integrating URLs into the catalog makes them uniquely qualified to formulate policy on how selected online resources should be incorporated in future versions of the library catalog.

#### **Four Possible Strategies for the Next Generation Law Library Catalog**

The future of the library catalog is at present clouded in uncertainty. Any major changes will ultimately be dependent on a number of factors, including more extensive user research, the willingness of institutions and vendors to agree on standards and cooperate on projects, and the capacity of researchers to develop technologies capable of producing certain features. Nevertheless, I would like to offer four potential directions in which the law library catalog could evolve. These are presented not as recommendations, but merely as examples of the sort of broad thinking that librarians should be engaging in at this point.

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<sup>115</sup> See Susan Westerberg Prager, *Law Libraries and the Scholarly Mission*, 96 Law Lib. J. 513, 523 (2004).

<sup>116</sup> See generally Karen Selden, *Linking Globally, Coping Locally: Cataloging Internet Resources at the University of Colorado Law Library*, 92 Law Lib. J. 439 (2000); Georgia Briscoe, Karen Selden, and Cheryl Rae Nyberg, *The Catalog vs. the Home Page? Best Practices in Connecting to Online Resources*, 95 Law Lib. J. 151 (2003).

Certainly law libraries could decide that they should simply “stay the course” for the time being. Under this strategy, law library catalogs would be targeted at servicing legal scholars, whose needs for depth and precision over speed and convenience would be presumed to be best served by the catalog in its current form. While libraries would continue to make small incremental improvements, and the catalog would still serve access and selection needs to some degree, there would be no effort to significantly change or improve how the catalog fills these functions.

A similar option is what Calhoun might term a “niche” strategy. Law libraries might decide that between the CALR systems and the legal information available on the open Web via Google, it is not worth devoting resources to making significant upgrades to the library catalog. In this scenario, law libraries would essentially get out of the “access business” altogether. Instead, they would focus resources on preservation, procurement, and delivery of materials, while possibly pushing records for some unique items in their collections onto the open Web (either directly or through a mechanism such as Open WorldCat). The library catalog would continue to exist, but it would be used primarily as an inventory mechanism; CALR systems and Web search engines would take the place of the catalog for purposes of access to legal information resources both inside and outside the library collection.

An intermediate strategy, and certainly one that is more capable of being realized in the short term, would be to move from a “multiple information silos” structure to one consisting of “two silos”: the CALR systems, and a federated grouping of records from the catalog and from the law library’s databases. Ideally, while users would not be able to search bibliographic records from the catalog and databases in Westlaw or Lexis at the same time, this catalog would contain links wherever a user might want to jump into a CALR system to continue a search. This catalog could also include many of the search and record enhancements referenced in this paper; among the additions to catalog records libraries could incorporate, an obvious one would seem to be information from the research guides that many law libraries offer on their web sites. One useful way to conceptualize this sort of catalog might be to think of it as making collection development decisions transparent to catalog users: if a library chose to discontinue or not carry the print version of an item because it was available on Lexis, a searcher for the item would retrieve a record stating this and directing him to the appropriate database in Lexis; if the library did not have the item in print because it was available on the Web, the searcher would be offered a URL; if the library felt demand for the item was low enough that requests could be satisfied through ILL, a link to ILL would appear for the searcher.

Alternatively, law libraries could make a commitment to architecting a catalog that strives for the ideal of “no dead ends,” essentially a one-stop information shopping experience for legal researchers. This extremely ambitious strategy, which would undoubtedly require a great deal of cooperation from Westlaw and Lexis,<sup>117</sup> would aim to

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<sup>117</sup> Certainly many law library catalogs already incorporate some links to items in Lexis and Westlaw. *See, e.g.,* the Gallagher Law Library catalog at the University of Washington School of Law, which includes a consolidated journal database that incorporates titles from Westlaw and Lexis as well as titles from other

create a federated search environment in which searchers could move seamlessly between the catalog and CALR systems, library databases, or even catalogs from other libraries in the university system, with a procurement option (digital full text, reservation at the library, shelf access, or interlibrary loan) only a single step away from an item's record. To maximize the impact of such a system, it should include multiple options for searching for records and sorting through results.

### **How To Start Moving Forward: What Law Libraries Should Be Doing Now**

1. With many of the general strategies for improving the catalog shaping their investigations, individual libraries should be gathering information about what their users want from the library catalog and thinking about how it can better meet their needs.<sup>118</sup> With limited resources at their disposal, it is critical that any significant changes to the catalog are driven by user needs. Do users want the catalog to provide more detailed description and/or be easier to use, or are they more interested in direct (*i.e.* digital) access to resources)? Do they want the library catalog to give them “one stop shopping” for legal research, or do they prefer that the catalog be limited to the library's physical and/or licensed resources? Do users want a more simplified catalog search mechanism, are they willing to trade some simplicity for greater precision, or do they want a system that provides multiple paths to each item?<sup>119</sup> Google and CALR have changed law library users' expectations for finding information, and libraries should be using both formal and informal methods for gauging these preferences.
2. Within the scope of their available resources and their abilities to take action separately, libraries should begin experimenting with new ideas for the catalog. As one of the respondents to the SOPAG Survey put it, “if they work, they stay, if not, they're gone.”<sup>120</sup> Even unsuccessful features provide the benefit of demonstrating to users a commitment to making the catalog more vital and responsive to their needs.<sup>121</sup>

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digital and print titles in the library's collection. Available at <http://bt3de4uv6v.search.serialssolutions.com/>. However, what I am proposing would go much farther and allow users to find records (and access points) for these journals (and other titles in CALR systems) intermingled with catalog records rather than in a separate “silo.” Obviously, this would require law libraries to obtain a large number of additional MARC records. Lexis and Westlaw could begin providing these records (wouldn't that be nice!), law libraries could create them cooperatively, or libraries could work to develop some automated process that would allow basic records to be created by harvesting necessary data from CALR systems.

<sup>118</sup> See generally Dwight B. King, Jr., *User Surveys: Libraries Ask, “Hey, How Am I Doing?”*, 97 Law Libr. J. 103 (2005).

<sup>119</sup> Compare Robert M. Jarvis, *What Law Professors Will Want from Law Librarians in the Twenty-first Century*, 96 Law Libr. J. 503 (2004) (arguing that libraries should move towards a fully self-service model that essentially removes the need for reference librarians) with Yolanda P. Jones, “*Just the Facts Ma'am?*” *A Contextual Approach to the Legal Information Use Environment*, Proceedings of the 6th ACM Conference on Designing Interactive Systems, June 26-28, 2006, (suggesting that law students rely heavily on collaboration and advice from local experts when performing research).

<sup>120</sup> SOPAG Survey, *supra* note 27, at 34.

<sup>121</sup> While many of the ideas for the next generation of catalogs require significant investments of resources or even technologies that have not yet been fully developed, some things can be tried on a small scale. For example, a library could put together a list of 20-30 resources that it considers particularly useful but that

3. Libraries should be looking for partnership opportunities – with affiliated institutions, with institutions serving similar user groups, and even with the private sector.<sup>122</sup> One of the few points of general agreement on the future of the catalog seems to be that for libraries are to make significant improvements in the services they provide to users via the catalog, they will need to increase cooperative and collaborative arrangements. Law library personnel should be considering what sorts of collaborative environments are likely to best serve their users. For example, the Calhoun Report, the BSTF Report, and the IU White Paper all anticipate a moved to shared catalog platforms. Would it be better for a library at a state law school to integrate its catalog with those of all the other university libraries in its state, with all of the public libraries in the state as part of a single “state library catalog,” or with a regional or national consortium of other law libraries?
4. Knowledgeable library personnel should participate in discussions about some of the evolving standards. Libraries should monitor developments relative to RDA and MARC and speak up on how proposed changes will help or hinder efforts to serve their users.<sup>123</sup>
5. Most importantly, libraries need to be communicating with each other more than ever – sharing ideas they’re experimenting with, pointing out relevant technology developments, and moving towards consensus.<sup>124</sup> “The next steps must be to engage all interested parties in serious dialogue, system prototyping, decision making, and action so the online library catalog of the future hits the ground running just as mass digitization projects end.”<sup>125</sup>

## Conclusion

Like it or not, the library catalog is on the verge of its most radical transformation since the advent of the OPAC. Libraries owe it to their users to familiarize themselves with

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are available to its users only through Lexis or Westlaw. The library could then add records to the catalog for each of the items and then track how many OPAC users followed the links. Libraries might also wish to experiment with incorporating collaborative Web 2.0 technologies, such as blogs and wikis, into the catalog – many of these systems are available at a relatively small cost via open-source software packages. *See generally* Stephen Abram, *Web 2.0, Library 2.0, and Librarian 2.0: Preparing for the 2.0 World*, SirsiDynix OneSource, May 25, 2007, available at [http://www.imakenews.com/sirsi/e\\_article000505688.cfm](http://www.imakenews.com/sirsi/e_article000505688.cfm).

<sup>122</sup> Law libraries have already been moving in this direction, particularly in the area of resource sharing. ShareLaw, <http://sharelaw.iii.com/>, an ILL arrangement among the law libraries at The George Washington University, the University of Miami, the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Texas, the University of Washington, and Yale University, is one such example.

<sup>123</sup> The Appendix to this paper offers a list of resources for monitoring and participating in discussions about the future of the library catalog.

<sup>124</sup> The most obvious forums for this sort of exchange in the law library world are the AALL’s Special Interest Sections on Technical Services and Online Bibliographic Services. The homepage for the Technical Services SIS is <http://www.aallnet.org/sis/tssis/>; the Online Bibliographic Services SIS has its website at <http://www.aallnet.org/sis/obssis/>.

<sup>125</sup> Markey, *supra* note 98.



current proposals for the catalog of the future and make their voices part of the conversation.

## APPENDIX: An Annotated Bibliography of Additional Sources to Explore and Monitor

It should be clear from this paper that there is very little consensus on how research library catalogs should evolve in the near future. One of the few things that does seem evident is that major changes will require a significant amount of consensus and cooperation among libraries in the development of new technologies and systems, the sharing of resources, and the implementation of new standards. Important information and perspectives are being offered almost daily, and the topic should be monitored closely over the next several months. The major reports discussed in this paper synthesize much of the prior thinking on the future of the catalog, and each includes an extensive bibliography of sources from the last several years.<sup>126</sup> The following sources are offered to assist in following the debate over the future of the library catalog as it continues to play out.

Library of Congress Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control website, <http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/>.

This group can be viewed as extending the discussion initiated by the Calhoun Report. Its charge is to “present findings on how bibliographic control and other descriptive practices can effectively support management of and access to library materials in the evolving information and technology environment”; to “recommend ways in which the library community can collectively move toward achieving this vision”; and to “advise the Library of Congress on its role and priorities” in the process. The Working Group is scheduled to report its findings in November 2007. This website offers up a schedule of and agendas for the Group’s upcoming meetings, minutes of past meetings, and a form for contacting the group. Note that the Working Group features individuals from a broader range of institutions than the interview group Karen Calhoun utilized in creating her report for LC – there are representatives from the American Library Association, the Special Libraries Association, and the Association of Research Libraries. The American Association of Law Libraries is represented in the Working Group by Richard Amelung of St. Louis University Law Library.

Futurelib, <http://futurelib.pbwiki.com/>.

This is a wiki-formatted discussion site aimed at building consensus on what the next generation of library catalogs and bibliographic data formats should look like. As of this writing (April 28, 2007), the core document here is *Framework for a Bibliographic Future* by Karen Coyle, Diane Hillmann, Jonathan Rochkind, and Paul Weiss.

LACUNY Blog, *Blogs about Catalogs and Cataloging*, <http://lacuny.cuny.edu/blog/2007/04/blogs-about-catalogs-and-cataloging.html>.

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<sup>126</sup> Calhoun Report, *supra* note 1, at 45-52; BSTF Report, *supra* note 2, at Appendix G, 58-79 (each citation is accompanied by a paragraph-long excerpt from or abstract of the source cited); IU White Paper, *supra* note 3, at Appendix B, 23-28.

The Library Association of the City University of New York has put together a pathfinder that aggregates some of the most influential blogs focusing on library catalogs (some of which are referenced below).

Joint Steering Committee for Revision of Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules home page, <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/jsc/index.html>.

“RDA: Resource Description and Access,” the successor to AACR2, is currently scheduled to be released in early 2009. Work on RDA began in 2004, and it is still very much a work in progress. The Committee’s website presents revisions to RDA as they are released and includes discussions, presentations, and other materials useful for tracking the next set of cataloging standards.

*Technical Services Law Librarian*, available at <http://www.aallnet.org/sis/tssis/tsll/>.

Presented quarterly by the AALL’s Technical Services Special Interest Section and Online Bibliographic Services Special Interest Section, this publication (available exclusively online) tracks developments in the cataloging world through the perspective of law librarianship. The December 2006/March 2007 issue includes a report from Richard Amelung on the first meeting of the LC Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control.

Cataloging Futures, <http://www.catalogingfutures.com/>.

Cataloger Christine Schwartz’s blog focuses on the development of RDA and the future of the MARC format but also touches on broader issues and developments concerning the future of the catalog.

Hectic Pace, <http://blogs.ala.org/pace.php>.

Andrew Pace heads up information technology for North Carolina State Libraries. (NCSU’s Endeca-based catalog, with features such as faceted browsing and sorting by relevance and popularity, is frequently cited as an example of the direction in which catalogs should be moving.<sup>127</sup>) Pace has a casual yet intelligent style that makes his writing easy to follow (he also writes the “Technically Speaking” column for *American Libraries*), and it is clear he spends a significant amount of time thinking about what library catalogs should be and/or could be doing.

Coyle’s InFormation, <http://kcoyle.blogspot.com/index.html>.

This blog from Karen Coyle, a consultant on digital libraries, does an impressive job of keeping readers updated on discussions related to the future of libraries. Coyle (who is also active in contributing to the Futurelib wiki referenced above) provided extensive coverage in her blog of the March meeting of the LC Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control, before an official report on the meeting was posted to the Working Group’s website.

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<sup>127</sup> NCSU Libraries OPAC, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/catalog/>.